

A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE  
O R D I N A T I O N

OF THE

Rev. I S A A C S M I T H,  
JUNE 24<sup>th</sup>. 1778, at SIDMOUTH, DEVON.

By T H O M A S W R I G H T, *J. B. Wright.*

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED

A S H O R T D I S C O U R S E,

By J O H N W A R D,

AND A

D E C L A R A T I O N

By I S A A C S M I T H,

Preceding the ORDINATION PRAYER:

WITH A

C H A R G E,

DELIVERED BY

J O S H U A T O U L M I N, A. M.

Published at the earnest request of the MINISTERS  
and others present.

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eter. 1778.

[ Price ONE SHILLING. ]

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE solemn Services of the Day were conducted in the following order.

The Rev. Mr. BARTLET, of *Topsham*, opened them with an introductory Prayer, and read the Scriptures.

The Rev. Mr. BERRY, of *Crediton*, prayed.

The Rev. Mr. WRIGHT, of *Bristol*, preached.

The Rev. Mr. WARD, of *Taunton*, after the delivery of His Discourse, and Mr. SMITH's Declaration, prayed over him, with the Imposition of the Hands of some of the Ministers present.

The Rev. Mr. TOULMIN, of *Taunton*, delivered the Charge.

The Rev. Mr. HOGG, of *Exeter*, concluded with Prayer.

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ADDY BATTLE

The Rev. Mr. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

The Rev. Mr. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

The Rev. Mr. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

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The Rev. Mr. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

The Rev. Mr. [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

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*The Regards of Christians to their Ministers,  
founded on their Office and Character.*

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By T H O M A S W R I G H T.

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I THESS. V. 12, 13.

*And we beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's Sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

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**P**ROTESTANT dissenting Ministers make no pretensions to a power of communicating ministerial gifts and graces. They are fully satisfied that qualifications of this nature are the gift of God; bestowed, not as they were in the days of the Apostles, in an instantaneous manner by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, but gradually in the course of his providence under the ordinary influences of his spirit, by which he furnisheth men with natural abilities, affordeth them means of improvment, succeedeth their studies, and disposeth them to engage in the sacred office.

Neither do they assume authority, to invest any with a right of exercising the ministry. Whoever is qualified

qualified and inclined, has a commission to preach the Gospel, from him who only can give one. And when a society of christians invite such a person to be their minister, and he consents, no power on earth can justly exclude him from that character: nor is any thing more, essentially necessary to his performing all the duties of it.\*

\* As they communicate no spiritual gifts or powers, so if they use Imposition of hands in ordaining ministers, they do it in compliance with *ancient custom*; and generally represent its design to be, to *distinguish the persons*, who are devoting themselves to the ministry, *from others*.—But as it is evident there is no occasion to point them out by it to God, and the ceremony is used during prayer; nor indeed to men; for they are sufficiently distinguished by other circumstances in the service—As in most, if not all, the places where we read of it in the New Testament, there was something extraordinary, some divine direction or gift; particularly 1, TIM. iv. 14. *Neglect not the gift which was given thee by promise, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*, which is the only place where the Presbytery is represented laying on hands in ordination—And since the generality who use this ceremony at present, profess to communicate very great gifts and powers, even the *Holy Ghost*, with *authority to absolve men from sin*: which all dissenters look upon not only as groundless, but exceedingly dangerous—and finally, as it is well known, that the Idea of something extraordinary and peculiarly sacred is generally connected with this ceremony in the minds of common christians: several think it most prudent to lay it intirely aside; as every thing, not enjoined by divine authority, certainly should be, if it become the means of countenancing superstition, or producing any bad effects, or if it cannot longer be used with propriety. On such accounts several religious ceremonies practised in the apostolic and succeeding  
ages,



To what purpose then, it may be asked, is Ordination? Do you practise it merely in compliance with custom? By no means! When properly conducted, it has a tendency to promote a most valuable purpose, both to ministers and people; as it is a virtual acknowledgment of their mutual engagements, before many witnesses—affords their brethren an opportunity of describing their reciprocal duties, and pressing a sense of the importance of them upon their hearts; as well as of joining in earnest supplications to the God of all grace, to render them blessings to each other.

The part of this service which naturally devolves upon me, is chiefly to point out, and recommend the principal duties of christians towards their ministers, If the distance of my stated residence should prevent, me from insisting upon what might be peculiarly suitable to the state of this church, and enforcing it by the

ages, are now disused by the generality of christians; as *saluting one another in their places of worship with an holy kiss*: and *anointing the sick with oil*. The former of which is frequently inculcated by St. Paul in Rom. 16. 16. 1 Cor. 16. 20. &c. &c. And the latter by St. James, 5. 14. *Is any man sick let him send for the Elders of the church, and let them pray for him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord &c.* Now if christians can drop, without concern, usages, which were not only practised by the primitive christians, but actually required by the apostles, because they cannot be observed with decency or propriety, why should they be solicitous about ceremonies, for which they have no command at all, and which tend to inspire wrong sentiments of religion, and are made use of to support superstition in a very high degree!

the influence of intimate friendship; it will likewise preserve me, from the just suspicion of intended censure, and interested views. And indeed I trust no essential direction will be omitted, as I am convinced, no motive will be wanting, if I can properly illustrate this exhortation, which the great Apostle of the Gentiles, with Silvanus and Timotheus gave the church at Thessalonica, which they had planted and highly esteemed; which they gloried in, and hoped to have for a crown of rejoicing at the appearance of JESUS CHRIST!

*We beseech you brethren, to know them who labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

In discoursing from these words I shall endeavor to represent to you very briefly, in the

I. place, the Titles and Office of the stated Ministers of the Christian Church, and to illustrate the particular account here given of their work; with a view in the

II. To explain, and inforce by such motives as arise from their character and office, the temper and conduct of their people toward them, implied in *knowing and esteeming them very highly in love*. May the divine blessing render these meditations, conducive to our edification in love and universal holiness!

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The description here given of their character and work, as well as several other circumstances observable in the context, shews, that the passage relates to the stated ministers of religion among the Thessalonians, and affords a proper occasion, to enquire into the titles and office of the settled ministers of the christian church, as appointed by CHRIST and his Apostles. Now the stated ministers or officers in the primitive church, understanding the words in their greatest extent, were *Bishops and Deacons*. Thus we find the Epistle to the Philippians addressed to *the Saints* (or body of common christians) *with the Bishops and Deacons*, who together constituted the whole church. But in our text, I apprehend, we are to understand chiefly if not solely, the former, or Bishops; persons who *laboured in the word and doctrine*; the latter or Deacons being appointed to take care of the temporal affairs of the church, as you may see, Acts vi. And if at any time they are found preaching the gospel, it is by virtue of another character they sustained; thus Philip, having served the office of a Deacon in the church at Jerusalem, obtained a higher degree, and became an *Evangelist*, or an assistant of the Apostles in preaching the gospel in the world. (Acts xxi. 8.)

These ministers are mentioned in scripture by different names and titles. Sometimes they are called *Presbyters* or *Elders* from their age; persons of years, on the first planting of Christianity, being generally chosen



sen to the sacred office. Where let it be just observed by the way, the practise of deriving titles of office from *age*, is not peculiar to religion. That famous assembly the Senate of Rome, and the Senators who composed it, were so called from *Senes* old men, because at first it chiefly consisted of persons in advanced life. The highest titles of quality among the French, Spaniards and Italians, are likewise taken from the same circumstance. Nor need we go abroad for illustrations of this point. The chief Magistrates in our Counties, in the Saxon times, were called *Alder* or *Elder-men*; as every one knows, the principal Magistrates in our cities and considerable corporate towns are at this day.

At other times the ministers of religion are described, by titles derived from their *office* or *work*, as *Pastors* and *Teachers*, and particularly *Bishops*, which in the original signifies *Overseers*. But tho' their names and titles were different, their office and order were the same. Thus the persons who are stiled *Elders of the church of Ephesus* Acts xx. 17th verse, are in the 28th. verse called *Overseers*, or *Bishops*, as the original word should have been rendered here, by our Translators, as it is in all other places: the words are, *from Miletus Paul sent for the Elders of the church, and said unto them, take heed unto yourselves, and unto all the flock of God, over which the holy Ghost hath made you Bishops to feed the church of God—That Elders and*  
*Bishops*

*Bishops* were only different names for the same persons, in the Apostle's days, appears likewise from TIT. i. 5—7, Where St. PAUL says, *I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any man be blameless &c. for a Bishop must be blameless &c.* Now if the office of a *Bishop* had been different from that of an *Elder*, there would have been no force at all in his reasoning. One could not argue from the one, to the other; at least from one who is supposed to be more excellent, to one that is less so: it would be unreasonable to say, that because such a thing is necessary to qualify a man for a high station, that therefore it must be necessary to fit him for filling a lower one. The same truth is also apparent from 1. Pet. v. 4. where he exhorts the persons, whom he had just before called *Elders*, *to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof*, or as it is in the original, *discharging the office of BISHOPS*. But there is no occasion for any more considerations to shew that *Bishops* and *Elders*, or retaining the original word *Presbyter*, are, in the sense of Scripture, the same person and no other than *Pastors* and *Teachers*. (Eph. iv. 11.) These are the ministers which the Apostles and Evangelists, ( who were themselves extraordinary officers, designed to continue only for a short time ) ordained, or appointed with the concurrence of the people, in the several churches they formed; and who were considered, for some hundred years, as of the same order. Of this the historians of those ages

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fully inform us, as may be seen by the English reader, in Lord Chancellor King's *Inquiry into the Constitution of the primitive Church*; where he shews particularly, that for a long time, every Church, or single Congregation of Christians\* had its own Bishop. And it is apparent from two passages of scripture before cited, that in the Apostles' days, some particular churches had more than one Bishop, or they had *Pastors* and *Teachers*, tho' we find that pretty soon, when there were two or more ministers in a church, the title of *Bishop* was confined to one of them, who was, in a peculiar sense, it's *Pastor*, and the rest were called *Presbyters*; but still they were considered as of the same order. The office of a Diocesan Bishop, who has authority over the Ministers of several single congregations, as far as I can find, has not the least foundation in Scripture, or the practice of the primitive times; but seems to be an effect of that spirit of worldly power and dominion, which in process of time, grew up among Christians, in direct opposition to the humble Spirit and precepts of CHRIST and his Apostles!

Having thus considered the Titles and Office of the stated ministers of the primitive church, by which  
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\* A Church, in those days never signified more than one Congregation. When there were more societies of Christians in one place or country, we read of the churches of that place. E.G. the Churches of Galatia and of Asia, 1. Cor. xvi. 1—19. This was the case for several Centuries, as Lord King clearly proves.



you may judge, who in the present age come nearest the Scriptural model ; I proceed to illustrate the account here given of their character and employment, which are represented in three particulars.

The 1st. is, that they *labour among their people*. Many, it is probable, look upon the ministry as an extremely easy profession, the duties of which may be discharged with very little care and diligence ; as some may possibly have entered upon it, with views of indulging themselves in a life of great indolence and pleasure. And were it's duties no other than such persons seem to imagine, their sentiments and expectations would be just. Had the ministers of the gospel no more to do, than embrace the prevailing notions of religion ; weekly to deliver a common-place discourse or two, adapted to the prejudices and passions of their hearers, and offer up a few general prayers, whether prepared for them by others, or suggested by the predominant disposition of their own hearts at the time, they could with no great propriety be said to *labour among their people*, or be described, as they are in other places, by titles drawn from employments, that indicate great vigilance, care, industry, vigor and fortitude, as Shepherds, Husbandmen, Builders and Soldiers.

But if they be careful to derive their sentiments from the word of God, and to preach the pure doctrines of

the Gospel, free from the errors and superstitions of men—If they be to acquaint themselves with the springs and principles of the human soul, and the means of affecting them; not that they may humor men's prejudices, and gratify a false taste, but remove their prepossessions, rectify their vitious inclinations and lead them to virtue and happiness — If they be to acquaint themselves with the spiritual state of their hearers, that they may be able as good stewards of the household of God, to distribute a portion of suitable food to every one in due season; and to offer up to heaven, petitions and thanksgivings, with energy and variety of thought and expression, adapted to the general state of religion, and likewise to the particular circumstances of their people, both in public and in private, on stated and extraordinary occasions: and it may be presumed, that on a little reflexion this will be found to be the case; then every considerate person must soon be convinced, that great attention of mind, close application to study, and a vigorous exertion of all their spiritual powers are necessary, to the right discharge of the duties of their office!

They know little of the gifts and graces, necessary to prepare a man for every good work, to which the ministerial office calls him, who think that when he has once finished a course of academical studies with tolerable diligence and success and laid the foundation of a christian temper and life in his soul, there is

is no necessity for frequent and serious meditation on the works and word of God; for exercising a strict discipline over his own heart, and for a careful inspection into the religious circumstances of his people, in order to qualify him for an honourable and successful discharge of his duty: Or that the actual performance of it doth not require the diligent exercise of his powers both of body and mind.

This kind of labour among their people, all faithful ministers find indispensibly necessary; it is well, if they do not find another sort of labour, or labour understood of trouble and distress of mind, unavoidable in the course of their ministry. I do not mean to intimate, that the work in itself is grievous! No! it is pleasant, it is delightful to a lover of truth, of righteousness and mankind! but on account of the little success of their endeavours to build up their people in knowledge, love and true holiness—of the carelessness, and impenitency of some of their hearts, the dishonour they bring on their profession, and the misery that awaits them! Peculiarly happy are they, if there be none who attend their ministry, like some among the Philippians, of whom St. Paul spoke *weeping*; and of whom they will not be able to think without heart-felt sorrow; who though *intemperance, worldly mindedness*, or some other ungodly disposition, are *enemies to the cross of CHRIST*, and consequently *whose end is destruction*!

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The 2d. character given of the ministers of the Gospel is, that they *are over their people in the Lord.*

This and such like descriptions of the office of christian ministers refer to their presiding in their assemblies having a principal share in the direction of the public services of religion, and in conducting all their spiritual affairs according to the rule and precepts given by CHRIST in the Scripture.

I am sensible this explanation of the phrase is very different from that which a regard to the language and customs of the world, on this head, would have induced me to have given. It is no uncommon thing to hear of *Spiritual rulers, the governors of the church &c.* And an acquaintance with the state of the christian world assures us, that these are far from being empty titles. Dominion has been and still is, in most places, claimed and exercised over the faith and consciences, not to say the persons and fortunes of their fellow christians, by the ministers of religion. And our text with similar expressions of scripture, hath been alledged in their vindication. But nothing can be farther from the spirit of those passages, as is manifest from other declarations and the conduct of the Apostles: thus St. Peter (1 Epist. v. 1. &c.) exhorts the *Elders to feed the flock of God and discharge the Episcopal office, but not to be LORDS over God's heritage, or over the christian people committed to their ministerial*

rial inspection and care. And St. Paul, in his own and his brethrens' name disclaims all pretensions to power over the faith of Christians. *Not* (says he 2. Cor. i. 24.) *that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.* Now if these eminent Apostles disavowed all claim to *dominion* over the faith, judgment and consciences of christians, must it not be consummate insolence in any other man or body of men, to pretend to exercise it!

Yes! this spiritual dominion is not implied in my text, and you are sensible it is not claimed by them *who labour among you and are over you in the Lord.* It's true they would establish a dominion over you; but it is the dominion of the Head of the church!—they would subdue you; but it is to truth and piety!—they do indeed desire to secure a personal interest in your hearts; but it is by the exercise of wisdom and goodness!—they wish to lead and guide you; but it is by the principles of the Gospel and to your own felicity!

The 3d. and last particular given of the duty of ministers in the text is, that they *admonish their people.*

This phrase, consistently with it's meaning in other passages of the scripture, might be understood of any kind of instruction and exhortation; but it seems most suitable to the connexion, to confine it to such things as are meant by it in common discourse, *viz.* caution-  
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ing, warning, reproving, and urging reformation of what is amiss in temper and conduct——branches of the ministerial office, naturally so disagreeable to a person of humble and charitable spirit, and unwelcome to those who stand most in need of services of this kind that to encourage the one to perform, and the other to receive them in a proper manner, the Apostle may be supposed to have mentioned this duty particularly, when he was exhorting christians to maintain respectful and affectionate regards to their ministers.

And indeed, as the discharge of it, will probably expose them to the resentment of the incorrigible, and perverse; so when conducted by prudence and tenderness, it is a proof of a disinterested and benevolent spirit, of faithfulness and genuine friendship, which at least, equally with any other part of their duty, render them objects of those sentiments and affections, which christians are here exhorted to entertain towards their ministers: which I now proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to illustrate and recommend.

*We beseech you brethren, saith the Apostle, to know them——and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*

The first thing here enjoined upon christians, is to *know* their ministers. You must be convinced the word is to be taken in an extensive and exalted sense. It includes several things, relating to the affections and  
active



active powers of the soul, as well as the understanding. The Apostle may be understood, as exhorting the Thessalonians to acquaint themselves with the true character and office of ministers; to approve of the genuine design of their institution, and to encourage them in their work.

You are then, my friends, to consider the persons whose character and duty we have briefly represented, as the servants of GOD and of JESUS CHRIST, appointed to promote your spiritual improvement and eternal salvation. In order to which, you must remember, they are not to establish you in the belief of the peculiar doctrines of men; but in the truth, as it is in JESUS—not to indulge a vain curiosity, by amusing you with uninteresting speculations; but to feed you with such knowledge, as tends to purify the heart and regulate the life—not to connive at your vices or neglects, but faithfully point them out to you and remonstrate against them—not to make you zealous about trifles, but excite a concern in your breasts for the important duties and graces of true religion; *fidelity, mercy, and the love of God*—not to inflame your spirits against them that differ from you, but form you to moderation, and inspire you with brotherly love to christians of all denominations—not to flatter you with groundless hopes, but to keep you humble, watchful and diligent, by representing the necessity of persevering and advancing in a course of holiness; in order to your securing the approbation of your Lord, and enjoying the happiness promised to his faithful servants,

Such,

Such, you cannot but see, are the duties of christian ministers. A sense of which you should impress on your hearts, that you may countenance them in such services. And what, my friends, can be more reasonable? Are they not accountable to their Master? Hath not he commanded them to renounce all human authority in religion? Is not the sacred scripture a sufficient rule of faith and practice? Are they not required to declare the whole counsel of God; and should not you attentively consider what they propose to you from his word? How shall divine truth ever spread, unless enquiry be indulged. In what darkness and error should we still have been involved, if this liberty had not been taken by our illustrious reformers? And should not you encourage us to imitate their example in studying the holy scripture, in order to remove the errors and corruptions which deface the beauty, and obstruct the influence of the gospel of CHRIST on the hearts and lives of men?

The Bereans are transmitted with honour to posterity. (Acts xvii.) for their impartial enquiry after truth. And who can avoid seeing their excellence; as well as the despicable stupidity of them, who will not make use of the means of improvement in knowledge, which are afforded them? Truly ridiculous doth the pretended philosopher appear, who on the invention of telescopes, refused to view the planets through one, lest he should have been obliged to change his opinion concerning the system of astronomy!

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In a light equally ridiculous, and far more culpable, would a christian appear, who should refuse to avail himself of any assistances, for examining the great objects of the spiritual world, lest he should be forced to change his opinion concerning the particular system of religion, which he hath embraced.

But important as it is, to regard your ministers in their endeavours to promote the knowledge of religious truth in general; it is of unspeakably greater importance to regard their instructions, which immediately relate to your temper and conduct, and to apply them to yourselves. Unless their ministrations are chiefly directed to guard you against sin, and inspire you with a fervent love of God and man; they are not the faithful and prudent ministers of CHRIST, nor your friends. Unless you properly regard them in these things, the only valuable end of their labours, and your attendance upon them will be defeated. If you discountenance them herein, you directly *oppose the merciful counsels of God towards you.*

Farther you are to know your ministers, as persons whom Divine Providence hath raised up, and you have chosen to consult your spiritual welfare; and diligently attend upon their ministry. What can be more inconsistent with your obligations, than absenting yourselves, upon slight occasions, from public worship, or behaving in the time of it with drowsy indolence, when all the powers of your souls ought to be vigorously exercised?



exerted? Why should your ministers be *instant in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking and exhorting*, if you who appoint them to this service will not be constant and diligent in improving their labours? you cannot expect to have your mistakes rectified, your groveling conceptions of evangelical holiness raised, your desires of it quickened, and the graces of the divine life planted and perfected in your hearts, if you neglect the use of these means which God has instituted for such excellent purposes: not to say, what grief will pierce the bosoms of faithful ministers, if they see you slight the ordinances of the Gospel!

It is likewise suggested to our notice, that you are to consider them as men, subject to the same imperfections and infirmities with yourselves; putting candid constructions on their words and actions, and even making suitable allowances for their errors; as well as providing for their comfortable support.

It hath been observed, that however unwilling some christians may be, to acknowledge their ministers have superior judgment in matters of controversy (where one would naturally suppose them to excel) they expect them to be extremely perfect in their conduct; even in those instances that require a great degree of prudence; and sometimes not only censure them severely for errors that are slight in themselves, but neglect their interest, and desert their ministry. This, I trust, my brethren, will not be your case. For is it not

not highly unreasonable? Why should those errors exclude ministers from your regard, which you can easily pardon in other good men? Why should they only be out of the influence of your candor? Or why should you deprive yourselves of the benefit of their services, on account of some defects and errors that may attend them? For have they not many difficulties to encounter? Are they not liable to peculiar temptations?

I am not apologizing for licentious ministers, who run into the follies and vices of an extravagant age. I pity! I pray for such unhappy creatures! and would exhort them (had I an opportunity) to *repent and be zealous*: as I would you to avoid their company. My design is only to guard you against censuring your ministers for their infirmities, deserting their ministry, or neglecting their interest; and to excite you to treat them with candor and generosity.

This brings us to the second branch of the Apostle's exhortation, in which he carries the regards of christians to their ministers to a greater height; and (saith he) *esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*

The phrase is emphatical. It requires you to entertain such respectful sentiments of their characters, and affectionate dispositions towards their persons, as will exert themselves in the most kind and friendly offices.

St. Paul was too well acquainted with the constitution of the human soul, not to know, that esteem and

love are excited only by a sense of excellence; and too warm a friend of truth and moral rectitude, to encourage any to entertain such an apprehension of those, who do not really possess it; as he was undoubtedly too good a judge of subjects of this nature to imagine, that a mere office can give men true worth and render them objects of these regards. A man must, in some measure, do honour to his office, if he would derive honour from it.

When therefore the Apostle saith *esteem them very highly in love &c.* it is on the supposition, that their private characters are amiable; and that they discharge the duties of their stations with diligence and propriety.

And now my brethren, as the work in which your ministers are engaged, is the most important of any which it is possible for men to perform—as it is of the same nature with that, in which the Son of God disdained not to labor—as it hath the glory of God, and your moral perfection and everlasting happiness in view: so you will immediately be convinced upon reflexion, that the dispositions exercised in the faithful discharge of it, are such, as by the general consent of mankind in all other cases, deserve and conciliate esteem and affection.

Is not an ardent love of truth? Is not a lively concern for the moral improvement and perfection of mankind? Is not a life devoted to the support of liberty, and the best interests of one's fellow creatures—  
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are not these proofs of an excellent character?—and yet these qualities frequently receive additional beauty and value from the peculiar difficulties that arise, and the fortitude and self-denial, which they are obliged to exercise in the course of their ministry.

There is a solid foundation for these affections in the temper and conduct of your religious instructors; and there is abundant reason in prudence, to cultivate them in your hearts, and manifest them in your behaviour towards them. Your spiritual improvement and comfort depend, in a great measure, upon the esteem and love you have for them; as well as their reputation and usefulness in the world on the manner in which you treat them.

Is it possible my friends, I appeal to your own hearts, to view a man demonstrating, by the most substantial effects, a tender concern for your spiritual improvement and eternal felicity, without feeling a most affectionate and grateful disposition towards him springing up in your bosoms, and resolving that his concern shall be gratified, by maintaining a spirit and conversation becoming the benevolent genius of the gospel? Can you behold him, for the sake of CHRIST and your felicity, sacrificing all views of worldly grandeur and opulence, and satisfying himself with the prospect of a bare subsistence, without cheerfully furnishing him with the means of that subsistence, and if possible, rendering it more plentiful? Do they  
*esteem their ministers highly in love who neglect to*  
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encourage them in their difficulties, to comfort them in their troubles, and to preserve them from the distressing cares of indigence, by generously contributing to their comfortable support!

This last instance of regard to your ministers might have been enforced by considerations of justice, and the authority of CHRIST, who *ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.* 1 Cor. ix. 14. But I chuse to rest it on the noble foundation of esteem and love. I would have you my fellow christians, actuated in all you do by the most generous and excellent principles. And I trust you will perform every branch of duty implied in this exhortation, and all others from the noblest motives—from conviction of their reasonableness—from the love of GOD, of CHRIST and of mankind, and a desire of your moral perfection and happiness. I forbear therefore particularly to lay before you any other. I forbear attempting to fix your views on those solemn, awful scenes, which will e'er long open—on that eternal judgment which will take place—when both you and your ministers will be examined as to your fidelity, and be gloriously rewarded, or grievously punished, as you have performed, or neglected your duty!

This would be very affecting. I trust it would be superfluous; and therefore shall draw to a conclusion, with recommending to your peculiar attention, the last clause of my text, and a few other directions of the

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the Apostle in the same chapter, which have the most friendly aspect on the comfort and happiness of all who observe them, and the closest connexion with the design of this day's service.

The concluding words of my text, *you may recollect are, Be at peace among yourselves.* How numerous, how earnest, the exhortations of the scripture are to unanimity, not to unity of opinion, for that is impossible, while the minds and circumstances of men are different, but to unity of heart and affection, to mutual forbearance and brotherly love, I need not, I cannot say. Neither, can I fully describe the bad effects of neglecting, or the great advantages of properly regarding these precepts. But must just observe, that while animosity and contention prevent spiritual improvement, and even subvert the foundation of a truly christian temper; peace and brotherly love will conduce to your advancement in every part of the divine life; as they are, indeed in themselves, eminent branches of holiness. They will enliven your devotion; and give the highest pleasure to every publick ordinance. Your little earthly assemblies, they will render emblems of the grand celestial assembly. They will secure you the *presence of the God of peace and love*\*; who will take up his abode in you by the Spirit, † and diffuse his sanctifying, and comforting influence abroad in your hearts †. In a word, they will  
render

\* 2. Cor. xii. 11. † Eph. ii. 22. † Rom. v. 5. Gal. v. 22.



render you pleasing images of that gracious SAVIOUR, at whose birth the heavenly choir sang, *glory to God on high, peace on earth, and good will towards men!*

*If therefore, my brethren, there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, in being unanimous and having mutual love.*

But why should I warn you against dissensions? why need I go on exhorting you, though in the words of an Apostle. to peace and love? Methinks I hear a solemn whisper spreading through this assembly, gently communicating the fixed purpose of every heart — “For the honour of GOD and CHRIST, and the success of gospel ministrations, we are determined, there shall be no dissensions among us; no enmity of heart one towards another, or towards christians of any other society; no strife or contention, unless it be who shall excel in faith and holiness; who shall be most like their GOD and Redeemer in doing good, and adorn the doctrine of the gospel by the most amiable conversation!” That, my fellow christians, is an innocent strife! that is a truly glorious contest! It will occasion no alienation of affection; but fan a flame of sacred love in your hearts, which will consume all mean and earthly passions, and refine and perfect those that are excellent and divine.

Again he saith, *Rejoice evermore; Diligently cultivate*

vate, and on all proper occasions exert that joyful spirit, for which the relations you stand in to God, to JESUS and an eternal world, and the means of grace you possess, are a solid foundation. This will conduce greatly to the happiness of your lives, and your improvement in goodness; as well as to the honor of your religion.

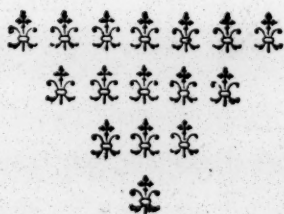
Moreover, *Pray without ceasing*. Labor to maintain constantly a devout frame of mind; a thorough sense of your entire dependence upon God, and ardent desires of his special favor, which will prepare you to engage with pious affections in his worship, on regularly returning seasons, and dispose you to address yourselves to him, on all favourable opportunities, in the course of your lives.

And finally, in those sacred happy moments, when your thoughts and hearts press towards the Deity; when with energy of faith and hope and love, with fervent desires of the glory of God, of the prosperity of his church, and the happiness of your own souls, you present yourselves before *the throne of grace*, remember us. *Pray for us*.

I address this apostolic exhortation to you, my dear christian friends and brethren, in behalf of your own ministers, in behalf of every one here present, and of all of that character in the world. Pray, that we may take heed to the ministry, which we have received

received of the Lord and discharge it with success—that we may build up our people in knowledge, love, and universal righteousness—and be finally presented to God, by the chief shepherd, together with our respective flocks, *a glorious church, with exceeding joy!*

*Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work!*





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A SHORT  
DISCOURSE

By JOHN WARD,

AND A  
DECLARATION

By ISAAC SMITH,

PRECEDING THE  
ORDINATION PRAYER.

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A SHORT  
DISCOURSE, &c.

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**T**HE great Apostle PAUL declares it to be a true saying, that " If a Man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work. " By a *Bishop* we understand, upon sufficient warrant, the Pastor of a single Christian Congregation, or at most of no more than He can personally serve. This office is indeed a *Work*, as you have heard it well represented by my very respectable Brother; which, after all our best, will have been but imperfectly discharged; and a *good* one: a pious, useful, holy employment; I think, the best of all now to be found in the world, and therefore worthy to be desired by those who have ability for it, courage to undertake it, a sense of the nature and importance of it, and a serious concern to fulfil it. But all are not without distinction to assume it, or be admitted to it by the consent of others.

A2.

The



The same holy Apostle PAUL guards it's approaches, when he directs his beloved TIMOTHY; "lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins." 1. Ep. 5. 22.. And it cannot be improper just to refer to his important Catalogue of the requisite qualifications for a Christian Bishop or Pastor, in that first Epistle to TIMOTHY, third Chapter. "A Bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife:" which must in reason be understood, that if a married man He should have *but* one wife; neither living in Polygamy, nor with a second wife, after a causeless divorce of the former, which was a practice very frequent both among *Jews* and *Gentiles* of that age; "vigilant," some render this *sober*, but according to the original verb from whence it is derived, which signifies to be *watchful*,\* our translation may as well be admitted, and it denotes a person likely to be attentive to the duties of his office; "sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach" both of a sufficient capacity and furniture of christian knowledge and a tolerable elocution, so as to be at least, audible and intelligible to his hearers; "not given to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous, — not a Novice," or quite a raw new convert, who might be likely to be puffed with vanity, or to behave with ostentation and insolence — moreover "he must have a good report of them that are without," have maintained a creditable character in the world, so as not to be the object of any general reproach and contempt. These

\* 11. TIM. iv. 5. 1. PET. iv. 7. v. 8.

These articles, Sir, though they will, many of them, be worthy rules of your future conduct, yet are not now recited with that view, but only as marks or qualifications actually and already existing in the person whom we ordain, or approve and recommend to God and the Churches in the work of the Ministry. And I trust that they are found in this young Gentleman who now presents himself to our suffrages and prayers:— that he is not illiterate and unqualified, not of bad or suspected character or morals, not altogether a stranger or unknown. We have had a good account of you, Sir, from AMERICA, which has been justified by your behaviour here.

The Apostle's instructions to TITUS upon the same affair are of like sense, and in many of the same terms; so that I only observe that he adds there, 1 TIT. 9. "Holding fast the faithful word as He hath been taught." The early Preachers of Christianity had the advantage above us, of being taught either immediately from the spirit of God communicated by the Apostles' hands, or from the living mouths of those eminently inspired Men, or such others as had received their instructions from them.† Yet is there a Form of sound words which we are carefully to retain and observe, without diminution, addition, or deviation. And what are these, but the words of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, as delivered down to us by his holy Apostles and Evangelists; the writings of the

New

† AS TIMOTHY and TITUS.

New Testament? Now, as it would be great inconsistency and hypocrisy for any one to engage in the christian Ministry who was not himself in heart a Christian, so the christian Preacher who most closely adheres to the doctrines and principles contained in these sacred records themselves will be most found in the faith: He that observes the Canons there appointed will need few or none more. Nor ought we, as Christians and Protestants, to admit of any other Standard of truth, of any other Rule of practice. "One is our Master even CHRIST;" who has expressly charged his disciples to "call no man Father upon earth," as having authority over the faith or consciences of others. And when, at the instigation of the POPE, a decree was made by the Imperial Diet at SPIRE, in 1529, "that Ministers should preach according to the sense and interpretation of scripture approved by the Church," a counter Protest was entered by six Princes and fourteen Cities, "that no doctrine was so certain as that of God's word, and nothing should be taught besides it.—This was the only sure and infallible way: but the Traditions of Men had no certain foundation."

From this famous Protest the honourable name of PROTESTANT was derived, as professing a strict adherence to Scripture truth and authority, with the right of private judgment and interpretation, in opposition to all ecclesiastical injunctions and decisions.

And



And it is with pleasure that I can relate a similar conduct of the Assembly of Divines at WESTMINSTER, as related by Mr. PHILIP NYE, a Member of that Assembly; to wit, "that the *Scots Commissioners*——  
 " proposed, that the Answers in the Assembly's Short-  
 " er Catechism should be subscribed by all the Mem-  
 " bers of the Assembly; intending very probably to  
 " make them a Standard of Orthodoxy: but the As-  
 " sembly rejected the motion of the Commissioners,  
 " after a considerable number in the Assembly had  
 " shewn it was an unwarrantable imposition upon  
 " Christians.† And "the advice which the same As-  
 " sembly gave to the Parliament in their time runs  
 " in the following terms. They only advise, "that  
 " the person to be ordained be asked of his faith in  
 " JESUS CHRIST; of his persuasion of the truth of  
 " the reformed religion, according to the scriptures,  
 " and of his Zeal for the truth of the Gospel and uni-  
 " ty of the church, against error and schism." †

Our great and good Mr. BAXTER, long after this, did, upon a signal occasion, in writing declare his

† Vide *Conscientious Nonconformity*—considered and defended, Printed for J. NOON. 1737. Page 77. And to the same effect, *A Defence of the Scriptures as the only Standard of Faith*, by the Author of the *Occasional Paper*, printed for Eman Matthews. 1721. Page 136. Likewise the *religious Establishment in Scotland examined &c.* printed for T. Cadel. 1771. P. 104.

† The religious Establishment in Scotland examined, P. 104, 5.

with, " that God's own word were taken for a sufficient form of our consent and concord, in order to "union and communion." \*

Indeed our religion is never safe, as a System, but as it lies in our Bibles, and in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, It may be granted that there is an advantage in the method of Confessions of Faith which has been used among the Protestant Dissenters, on such occasions as the present, above a subscription to any fixed and prescribed forms; viz, that every man is allowed to express his own sentiments only, and in his own language. But still to myself there appears to be in them some tacit or implied acknowledgment of a right in others to be Triers and Judges of the Candidate's faith; some relick of the old impositions; and I am very apprehensive that they have sometimes been attended with considerable inconveniencies and temptations.

Our accounts of the New Testament Ordinations are brief, and possibly some things might, occasionally, at least be done in them, of which we are not informed. But as we are not informed we do not know them. And in my late thinking upon this subject, it hath become matter of serious doubt with me, what right we have to put interrogatories or questions

\* A Defence of the Scriptures as the only Standard of Faith, &c. &c. 1727.

ons for which we have no scripture precept or example. I am afraid of going beyond my line; of taking an authority not given, or adding to what is written. To instruct, to exhort, to preach the word, in season and out of season, both statedly and occasionally, are general directions which may be applied to a variety of occasions: and these, I think, vindicate me in what I am now doing.

It has been mentioned above, and may be reckoned among the qualifications for the Episcopate or pastoral office, that a man have a desire to it. Need I ask if this be your disposition? would you otherwise stand in your present situation? He that does should *hold fast the form of sound words*. Can this be judged of so well by a verbal, single declaration of his christian faith, even in scripture terms, as by his general profession of it, regular attendance upon it's peculiar ordinance, the Lord's Supper, and by his serious preaching it? If a man can prevaricate and falsify in these instances I know no Test sufficient to hold him; to bind his own conscience or give satisfaction to others. I do not apprehend that so much as a confession of his faith in general, even in scripture terms, was required or used in the first Centuries of Christianity. The person to be ordained was known already to be a Christian, and stood forth in that avowed character. †

† "I think it is pretty evident, that there is not one instance throughout the whole New Testament, or in the  
\* ancient



But whatever may be thought as to the propriety of a general scripture declaration, I cannot but express my acquiescence in, my approbation of this young Gentleman's forbearing a more large and particular confession. And permit me likewise, good people of his congregation, to commend, to applaud your liberal, catholic, protestant, christian Spirit in not requiring it.

But, O my christian Brother, when I consider but a little the office you undertake, and what I myself have found of it, who have but very imperfectly discharged it; it's solemnity and importance, the degree of thought and study it requires to execute it but moderately well; the difficulties and doubts that may probably often occur to your own mind, as to points either of doctrine or of conduct; the various tempers and sentiments you may

"\* ancient times of Ecclesiastical history; not one instance, I say, of a man's making a Confession of his faith to qualify him for ordination as a Minister, if he had been a professed disciple of Christ before. But it appears, that in ancient times men were set apart to the Ministerial office, upon it's being known and acknowledged that they were already Christians; and not only so, but upon their being known and believed to be fit to instruct others in the doctrines and duties of christianity; for which reason there was no occasion to make an additional profession of faith, in order to their being set apart to the Ministry." Vide Mr. Joseph Burrough's Sermons, P. 367.

\* None before the *Nicene* council.

may have to deal with in some congregations; and how hard you may find it to please others, yourself and God; the occasion there may be sometimes to admonish and rebuke, sometimes to comfort and assist, even in cases where you yourself may want comfort; the difficulty there is of carrying it properly betwixt contending parties, with integrity, discretion and a regard to your duty and their good; the patience, the meekness, the self-denial, the prudence, the compliance that may at sometimes, the fortitude that may at others be necessary——but I cannot go over all—I am ready to say, in the Apostle's language, concerning his much higher office, "who is sufficient for these things?"

[ The task is hard, but great. To follow, though at humble distance, the Son of God, who acted in this very character, and preached righteousness in the great congregation: to assert and maintain his sole authority over his church, when it hath been invaded and infringed by the decrees, doctrines and traditions of men: to preach Christ Jesus the ALONE Lord, and ourselves servants for Christ's sake: to instruct and persuade from the immediate oracles of divine truth: to minister, in effect, in the sanctuary; to bear, in a gospel sense, the vessels of the Lord: to be the mouth of men in addressing God, and to speak from God to men: to save souls from death, by their conversion and reformation, and to hide a multitude of sins: to lead our fellow creatures by the hand to God and glory——these considerations might carry me to

magnify our office: to assert it a beneficent, a sacred, a venerable, a noble employment. Oh! such indeed it is, were we equal to it, do we but in any degree suitably fulfil it. But we are frail imperfect men. Happily, the Master whom we serve can have compassion upon the infirmities of such as mean well, and use their sincere endeavours. ] ‡

You choose to take and exercise your ministry among Protestant Dissenters; whereby you join with the much inferior number, and turn your face from all those prospects and encouragements which are naturally inviting. And it may be affirmed, that the established Church has shown a sufficient readiness to receive such as have gone off from us, of whom some have attained to the highest preferments and dignities, while others of not inferior character or abilities have chosen to continue among us. Yea, you seek a character in life which is in contempt with many, and expose yourself to many future trials and difficulties among societies in which you cannot demand or obtain either respect, compliance or support from any one but as influenced by his own conscience, judgment or inclination. But I forbear; I would not discourage you. There are motives, there are rewards: and the grace of God is sufficient to carry you through all.

I do not, according to what has been said already, take upon me to put you to an examination as to your

‡ Added since.



your motives and views in seeking the ministry in general, or exercising it among us. But I judge not that I have any right to prevent you, if you think it necessary or proper to offer any thing to justify yourself in one or the other, or if you apprehend that it will be to the satisfaction or edification of your own people or of this Audience in general: or that it is particularly suitable and proper on the present occasion. I neither require, nor dissuade. Act entirely according to your own judgment.

I beg this Audience to permit a word or two more, with respect to that part which is now soon to follow. We do not in the least pretend, by the laying on of hands, to communicate any Spiritual gifts or graces: we disclaim any such notion. It belonged to the Apostles alone to give the Holy Spirit, even in that first miraculous age of Christianity: and the laying on of their hands for that purpose was quite a distinct and different thing from that used for Ministers in ordinations: for *their* hands were often laid on such as were not to be Ministers. Timothy could not give spiritual gifts, but yet He was to lay on his hands. 1 Epistle, v. 22. Timothy himself received imposition of hands from the Presbytery, who stood in an inferior rank to that office of Evangelist, which he either then received or in which He afterwards acted. 4th. chapter. verse the 14th. Even Saul and Barnabas were set apart, or dedicated to a particular ministerial service, by no higher persons than the Prophets and Teachers, in the Church at Antioch, by fasting,

prayer and the laying on of their hands, by direction of the divine spirit. Acts 13th. 1—4: which is afterwards expressed, ch. 14th. v. 26. as a recommendation of them to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. We use it therefore as a scriptural and solemn form of benediction, prayer and commendation to the grace of God, in this especial office; and it may at the same time be considered as an expression of our own approbation of the person to whom it is applied, our concurrence with the Church in their choice and call of Him to it. But whether this Rite doth properly invest and authorize, or be essentially necessary to the office, has been questioned by many judicious persons. This point I do not take upon me to decide, or even to enter into at present. To myself the imposition of hands seems decent, scriptural and regular; nor do I see any reason to scruple or disuse it on account of the injudicious opinions of some concerning it, or the vain and excessive pretences which have been annexed to it. At the same time, I make not the least question, that persons so set apart, so ordained, or recommended and accepted in the ministry, and by such hands as ours, have as valid a title to it as any christian Ministers now in the world. But all farther qualifications and sanctifying influences are God's, and not in our power to bestow. To his blessing, to his owning and crowning the work of this day, and giving it all desirable after success, let us apply and commend this young Person on the present occasion.

A

# DECLARATION

MADE BY

Mr. S M I T H.

**I**T is with equal sincerity and pleasure, I embrace the present opportunity of declaring, that I look upon the Christian Ministry, as a divine institution; —that I regard it both in an honourable and important light; honourable, as an employment in which the Son of God and his Apostles have been engaged; important, as it relates to the best and most essential interests of mankind; —that I believe the design of this ministry to be the promotion of religious knowledge, genuine piety, personal virtue and universal benevolence among men; by these means the more effectually to secure their present tranquillity, and train them up for a scene of greater perfection and happiness hereafter; —and that in order to this great end, it is the business of the ministerial office, to assist men in obtaining a competent acquaintance with the sacred truths of revelation, to establish in their minds a due reverence of the Author of the Christian religion and belief of his divine authority, and to persuade them, by the united force of precept and example, to a cheerful obedience to the precepts of his Gospel.

With



With these views of the nature and design of the ministerial character; with, I trust, an unfeigned desire of advancing the honour of my maker, the interest of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the world, and, what according to my apprehension is necessarily connected with it, the good of my fellow creatures, I have undertaken the Pastoral office, and shall think myself happy, if I am made thro' the divine blessing accompanying my humble endeavours, the instrument of "saving a soul from death," and leading, tho' it be only a single individual, in the way to life and happiness. While divine providence is pleased to continue me in it, it is my resolution, in dependence on the grace of God, faithfully to the best of my ability to discharge the duties of this office. Conscious of my imperfections, and of the diligence, watchfulness, zeal and prudence incumbent on me, as a minister of CHRIST, I request the prayers of my brethren in the ministry, and of you, my friends and fellow christians, assembled together on this day.

The reasons why I chuse to exercise my ministry among Protestant Dissenters are briefly these.

1. Because I esteem the mode of worship, and of administering the peculiar ordinances of Christianity commonly adopted by the Protestant Dissenters of this kingdom, to be more agreeable to the purity and simplicity becoming Christian worship, more conformable

ble to the practice of the Apostolic Age, and more conducive to general edification, than the liturgy, form and ceremonies of the Established Church.

2. Because I know of no superior order among the ministers of the Christian Church, invested by scriptural warrant with the sole-right of ordination, confirmation, and ecclesiastical discipline and government; the terms bishop, presbyter, or elder, and pastor, used in the New Testament, referring precisely to one and the same office, as for instance, in the 20th. of the Acts of the Apostles, where we are told that PAUL "sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the *Elders* of the "church", whom he addresses, when they were come to him, in a different style, "take heed unto yourselves, "and all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath "made you *Overseers*, or as the word may be rendered, "*Bishops*." And in the Epistle to TITUS, the same Apostle writes, "for this cause left I thee in Crete, that "thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain *Elders* in every City, as I had appointed thee;" yet in describing the qualifications of these officers, to be ordained in every city, it is presently added, "for a *Bishop* must be blameless, as the "Steward of God." Neither do I know that there is any authentic evidence from antiquity to prove, that the terms *Bishop*, and *Presbyter* were used to signify any distinction of office in the christian Church, 'till very near the close of the two first Centuries.

3. Because it is contrary to the right of private judgment

ment inherent in every man, and inconsistent with the allegiance I owe to the sole law-giver and supreme head of the Church, even JESUS CHRIST, to acknowledge that any man, or body of men, have "power to "decree rites and ceremonies, or the least authority "in controversies of faith."

4. Because "the holy scripture, (as expressed in the sixth Article of the Church of England) containeth "all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever "is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, "is not to be required of any man, that it should be "believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite "or necessary to salvation." And yet, notwithstanding this confession, it is indispensably required of every candidate for ordination. in the episcopal church, that he should not only declare his "unfeigned assent "and consent to all and every thing contained in the "book of common prayer," but also subscribe his belief of articles, neither of which "is read in," and some of them, I think, upon serious examination, cannot fairly "be proved by the holy scripture."

Convinced of the justice of these reasons, I cannot with propriety seek for ordination in the church, established by law, within this realm. But while I thus publicly declare the principles, on which I act as a Protestant Dissenting minister, I beg leave at the same time to express my hearty affection for all, who "call" CHRIST "Master and Lord," tho' their conduct may in some respects be different from mine, and my present wish is, that we may equally "endeavour to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."





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*The Watchfulness incumbent on Ministers,*

C O N S I D E R E D

I N A

C H A R G E

D E L I V E R E D A T T H E

O R D I N A T I O N

O F T H E

Rev. I S A A C S M I T H,

At SIDMOUTH, DEVON, JUNE 24<sup>th</sup>. 1778.

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By J O S H U A T O U L M I N, A. M.

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## C H A R G E, &c.

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**I**T is not without fear of incurring some Censure for taking a part in the services of this day very improper for me, that I rise up, dear Sir, to address you: but you will permit me to plead your earnest request and the necessity which led you to desire it of me, some Friends on whom it would have more fitly devolved having absolutely declined it. And under painful apprehensions of my insufficiency for this office and of the defects which will run through the discharge of it, I bespeak the Candour of this Audience.

A2

To



To assume the language of a Dictator or Instructor would be very unbecoming the perfect equality that subsists between us as Fellow-labourers in the cause of Christ, and particularly unsuitable to my years and standing in the Ministry. I can only submit, Sir, to your candid consideration, some thoughts which have often occurred to my own mind, when reflecting on the nature of the ministerial Character.

They may, perhaps, meet with your approbation, as just and important; and being laid before you in connexion with the solemn engagements of this day, may affect the heart with peculiar force.

The Hints, which with due deference to you and my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, I would suggest, shall be ranged under the general exhortation of the Apostle PAUL <sup>to Timothy</sup> second Epistle, chapter the fourth, and verse the fifth:

*" Watch thou in all things."*

This admonition plainly implies that the character we bear as Ministers of Christ, is not exempted from temptations and snares. Temptations indeed are necessary to the state of discipline and trial, in which all rational creatures exist. They will be various and different according to the relations we fill in life, and the duties we are called to discharge.

It is a part of wisdom; it is an instance of piety at the entrance on a new office, to anticipate the temptations which we may be called to encounter.

This

\* [ This will furnish the mind with principles of resistance, will prepare it for the season of contest, and direct it's aspirations to the God of Grace, from whom cometh all our strength. Our Lord and Master previously to the commencement of his public ministry, was led by a divine influence into the wilderness, and there was not only exercised with some immediate trials of his faith and virtue, but had presented before him an emblematical representation of the snares which would avail him in the discharge of his important embassy.† By this example we are instructed to take a voluntary survey of the temptations, to which our character is exposed.

They arise from various sources, and operate, though not perhaps always in a visible, yet in a powerful manner upon the heart, affecting the springs of action and the temper of mind with which we perform our duties. Some will betray the unguarded into vices which are a disgrace to any relation in life, and are peculiarly scandalous in a minister. Others, if we be not watchful, will beget in us dispositions and views that materially influence the management of our office, and our acceptance with God and with Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; and unless we obtain their approbation, it is of little consequence what reputation or name we may secure among men.] Let

\* NB. The passages included within Crotchets were suppressed in the delivery, for want of time.

† See this point illustrated and proved in the very ingenious piece of Mr. FARMER, on CHRIST'S *Temptation in the Wilderness*.

Let us then, my respected Friend, reflect what reasons we have to watch in all things; what great occasions there are for circumspection and resolution. Besides the temptations to which we are liable as *Men*, there are snares *peculiar to our office* and arising from our situation.

First, let us remember, Sir, that we are not exempted from the Temptations to which Mankind in general are exposed. As the Apostle observeth to the people of *LYSTRA*, "we are Men subject to like Passions with others."

The Character we bear does not eradicate the human feelings, nor make us proof against the impressions of sensible objects. The interests and scenes of this world have charms for us, often too powerful, for the considerations of reputation and usefulness to withstand. The strength of appetite, the splendor of life, the advantages of wealth, the manners of the world, and the persuasions of friends, are snares to our virtue, as well as to that of other men. Our profession is no security against the warmth of youthful inclinations, the desires of ambition in riper life, or the anxious cares of advanced years. It is not our felicity any more than it is that of others, to have always a mind composed and recollected; circumspect and firm. We, alas! are liable to be seduced in an unprepared moment, or to be born away by a violent temptation.

Hence



Hence, it is to be deeply lamented, some Ministers have degraded their characters by sensual indulgences; or have lost the dignity of it in light and trifling pursuits; or have fixed on themselves the reproach of an avaricious temper; or have sunk into mere men of the world. Hence the conduct of those who should have been bright ornaments of virtue, hath grieved the hearts of the pious, and opened the mouths of the profane.

What a lesson of caution is this! How powerfully do these reflections enforce the apostolic exhortation: "watch thou in all things." The mind of PAUL seems to have been greatly affected with this view of things: "I keep under my body, saith He, and bring it into subjection; least that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away." And when you, dear Sir, consider the nature of the human frame, and survey the scenes with which we are continually conversant, there certainly appeareth to you great reason for circumspection and prayer; great propriety and force in another exhortation of the Apostle: "But thou, O Man of God, flee these things," i. e. the sins which he had mentioned in the preceeding Context, arising from worldly passions and prospects, "follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness."

Secondly

Secondly, as the temptations of life receive their peculiar turn from the circumstances in which we are placed, it is expedient to recollect to what snares our *profession, as Ministers*, particularly exposes us. Our christian Friends are, perhaps, frequently ready to congratulate us, and envy our station as a screen from those dangers which threaten their virtue, and a security against those assaults to which they are continually liable. But, alas! they little know the nature of our office, and the manner in which the difficulties and discouragements of it operate. [The Superiority supposed to belong to it]—the Studies in which it engages us—the Relaxations it requireth—the peculiar and solemn Duties of it—the Aims and Views which influence our conduct in it—and the Unsuccessfulness of our Labours, furnish so many reasons to regard the apostolic admonition; “Watch thou in  
“all things.”

[1. The *superiority* supposed, or allowed, to belong to our character may, in several respects, prove hurtful to our virtue. Let no offence be taken at the mention of superior dignity of office. No other superiority is meant than what is founded on a liberal education and literary attainments; and is derived from the presidency in religious societies with which we are invested, but especially from the great and noble ends of our station. If a sense of this excellency of our office lead to a decorum of behaviour, elevate

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the mind, and animate our vigour in it's duties, it hath a becoming and useful effect. But is there not a danger of our estimating the superiority of character too highly, and of being too sensible of it?

This will feed pride and conceit: will beget arrogant and supercilious airs. We shall become overbearing in conversation, or dogmatical and assuming in pastoral duties. It will cherish ambition and the love of power; and tempt us to usurp on the rights of our people or brethren. A fondness for preheminance, like other desires, will not be satisfied with the present sphere of exertion; but will be ever restless, seeking to enlarge and extend it's influence. How offensive, how inconsistent, how sinful such dispositions in the teachers of that religion, the first lesson of which is "blessed are the poor in spirit;" in the servants of that Master, "who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."

The high value our office may tempt us to set upon ourselves, will naturally tempt us to expect a proportional attention, homage and respect from others.

Let this expectation be answered, it will increase and cherish our vanity; and perhaps betray us into an abuse of the influence we may acquire over particular persons, to purposes not very becoming or honourable—Let this expectation be disappointed, as most probably



probably will be the case, in an age, not only so enlightened as this, but so indifferent to every thing connected with religion, chagrin and resentment will work in the breast, which will either rise into passion, or fix in settled moroseness or malevolence, or prey on the spirit and devour the mind with grief and vexation.

Here let an holy guard be established. Let us check every imagination of pride, and subdue the love of power. We, dear Sir, will remember, that dignity arises not from power, but from exerting ourselves for the most noble and useful purposes; that our excellence of office is derived not from the display of talents, but from the virtues of our divine Master transcribed into our lives. } To proceed,

adly. Nothing it will be conceived can be more innocent than are the pursuits of Literature: as to the study of religion, it may be pleaded, that it is not only the direction of the thoughts to innocent, but to sublime objects; to the acquisition of knowledge which leads to "eternal life." Yet these studies may prove hurtful to us. Science hath so many charms; it opens so large a field of enquiry and investigation; it exhibits so many objects to please the fancy, to feed the desire of knowledge and to exercise the rational powers; that there is no small danger of its proving ensnaring, by detaining us in studies unprofitable to the main design of our office, or by interfering with the benevolent and useful services of it.

Knowledge in general, though in some respects it hath a tendency to convince us of our ignorance and to humble us, yet often begets confidence, fills the soul with conceit, and puffs it up with pride; dispositions very inconsistent with the modesty and humility essential to the christian Minister.——A Taste for the polite Arts and the *Belles Lettres*, especially when joined to the influence of that association with the polite and refined part of mankind to which it recommends us, will, if not watched against or counteracted by other causes, beget a sensibility, refinement and delicacy that will render us nice and difficult to be pleased in the common things of life, and averse from the conversation of the poor and of those who are not polished by learning and breeding, with whom however, as the helpers of the faith, comfort and holiness of mankind we ought often to mingle in friendly intercourses.——Too long and close an application united with a recluse life, cherishes a morose and unsociable temper, begets an impatience of contradiction, and is attended with an ignorance of the world and the rules of behaviour, which indisposes the heart for pleasing or being pleased; a turn of mind not becoming the servants of that Master, a beautiful part of whose character it is, that “He pleased not himself.”

There is a knowledge peculiar to our profession which tends to humble, to soften, to purify the heart;

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the knowledge of God in the glories of his nature and works, of CHRIST in the purity and beauties of his character and the riches of his grace, and of Religion in it's comprehensive obligations and interesting truths. But you, my respected Friend, are sensible that even the pursuit of this knowledge is not free from a dangerous influence; it is apt to check in their growth, if not kill, the seeds of piety, benevolence and faith in our bosoms; which it is certainly calculated to nourish and strengthen in others. For as we are very much called to study Religion as a *science*, and to examine it with the freedom with which we do other subjects of enquiry, this hath a tendency to abate something of the reverence due to it's sacred principles. We are also conversant with the difficulties which attend the investigation of the doctrines and evidences of Christianity; and contract, perhaps, sometimes, from philosophical disquisitions a kind of sceptical turn, which hath an unhappy aspect on the firmness of our faith, and weakens the impressions of it's objects.

On these accounts the studies of our office afford a call to vigilance. Time is too precious; life is too short to be wasted in pursuits, which how improving or entertaining soever, are foreign to the great object of our Profession. "If, as observes the excellent Dr.  
DODDRIDGE\*

\* DODDRIDGE'S Family Expositor. V. 1. P. 14. Note (i.)



DODDRIDGE, the main part of our time be given to "the *curiosities* of learning, and only a few fragments "of it to our great work, *the care of Souls*, we may see "cause in our last moments to adopt the words of a "dying GROTIUS, perhaps with much greater propri- "than he could use them; *Proh! vitam perdidit ope- "rose nihil agendo* ; Alas, I have thrown away life, "in doing nothing with a great deal of pains."

As to religious enquiries, the importance of a firm and lively faith in the truths and discoveries of the Gospel is so great to give energy to our preaching, and to render our labours pleasant, can we watch too carefully against the insinuating influence of every thing which would diminish the force of heavenly truths, or bring our minds into an unsettled state, or spread a languor over our devout feelings. You will judge, dear Sir, whether it be not on this account highly expedient for us frequently to have recourse to the first and leading principles of Religion, to the plain and commanding evidences of it's divinity; to open our hearts by serious meditation to the power of it's truths; and frequently to take devotional views of it's Doctrines and Discoveries.

Should it not be remembered by us that Religion is not only the science of our profession; but a fund of rules, motives and consolations to us, as *Men*? There may, perhaps be particular need for our fre-

quent perusal of serious, lively and animated practical writers to counteract the tendency of those works, in which Religion is treated only as a matter of Theory, Speculation and Debate; that it may appear from the spirit, strain and manner of our labours, that we *believe* and *feel* and therefore *speak*.

3dly. Another reason for watchfulness in our office arises from this, that though our life be, as you, Sir, are sensible, in an eminent degree a life of study, it cannot be wholly so. The mind is jaded by close attention; the body is enervated by application; our health requireth frequent intermissions; and our studies cannot be pursued with cheerful alacrity, unless our spirits are enlivened by relaxation. But our diversions unless they be well chosen and regulated, will prove hurtful to us.

Important business will be deferred; too great a proportion of time devoted to them; expences incurred beyond our ability to support; a dissipated turn of mind contracted; and a disrelish for the calm delights of retirement produced.

The danger here is increased by the nature of our Pastoral duties and studies; since the fixed labours of our office, which admit no postponing, occur, only or chiefly, but on one day in seven; and the rest we may be apt to regard as what may be prosecuted with equal

equal advantage on any future, as on the present, moment. This circumstance likewise exposeth us to be considered by others, as Men always at leisure to be parties in any scheme of amusement. By these means, especially acting in concurrence with the love of company and the invitations of friends, we are liable to be drawn aside from a regular and diligent course of study; and evidently run the risk of being betrayed into a life of ease and indulgence, of visiting and dissipation; and even of forgetting, to use the words of the worthy Bishop CLAYTON, "that the amusements of Men of gaiety suit but ill Men of seriousness."

This will lessen our characters, obstruct our usefulness, and convert the office of Ministers of truth and salvation into that of pander to the pleasures of others. The great Mr. ABERNETHY therefore thought; "That Ministers of all Men had most reason to guard against this,—an habit of passing time in a trifling manner; as it was more particularly their duty always to preserve the mind in an aptitude for the best exercises and ever avoid every thing which had a tendency to dissipate the vigour of it." — Here let us frequently recollect the exhortation of the Apostle; it will animate our diligence: "Give attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine: Neglect not the gift that is in thee; meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all." Again.

4thly.



4thly. Not merely from our Studies or Amusements do Temptations arise, even the discharge of the peculiar and solemn Duties of our Office may prove prejudicial; detrimental to the life and power of Religion, which they are intended to excite and cherish in the minds of others. That we are so frequently called to direct our thoughts to God, and are so often engaged in services of piety, may be supposed to give us advantages for cherishing a devotional and heavenly temper beyond what can be easily imagined. But this judgment is not wholly well founded.

The duties of Religion are apt to become with us customary services. The Prayers we offer up, the exhortations we administer being performed ex officio, this hath a tendency to deaden the pious feelings. The Ideas and Sentiments, which by these exercises are brought to our remembrance, being familiar to the mind loose much of their weight: they have not an equal efficacy with things more new to arrest the attention, or to impress the heart as things that have not been so long tried. Our Prayers and our Sermons, if we wish that good sense, propriety and elocution should be discernible in them, are necessarily the productions of the understanding; so much so, as to be rather a check upon our feelings, than the spontaneous effusions of a devout heart. It may also be deemed an infelicity of our function, that we are obliged to enter upon the discharge of it's public offices at re-  
turning

turning seasons whatever be the state of our spirits or the frame of our minds.

What is the tendency of these circumstances, but to divert our attention and care from the cultivation of a pious *temper*, only or chiefly to the decent, external performance of our duty; to sink the exercises of piety into mere form; and to harden the heart?

You, dear Sir, will readily allow that this is a call to Watchfulness: \* lest under the shew of Piety we should be destitute of it's spirit; lest amidst repeated acts of worship our hearts should be estranged from the power and pleasures of communion with God; the worship of whom can be neither edifying to ourselves nor acceptable to him, unless it be conducted in spirit and truth. — You will further judge with me, Sir, that the admonition of the Apostle, " Watch thou in all things, " ought to be regarded as extending,

5thly. To our Views and Aims, that they be not perverted or corrupted. Various inducements present themselves to engage us to consult other interests besides or more than the interests of Truth and our divine Master: powerful considerations offer to draw us aside from the paths of integrity in the discharge of our duty. there

\* I may be permitted to refer for important Hints and Reflections on this and other Points here handled to an excellent Charge of Dr. SAVAGE, at the Ordination of the late very worthy Dr. WILTON, on JUNE 18th. 1766.

There is something very flattering, especially at the beginning of publick life, in Applause. The desires of pleasing and swaying Mankind are gratified by collecting a croud of admiring Hearers, and by securing the reputation of a fine Orator or excellent Preacher. But the love of Popularity is a Motive which seldom acts by itself. Our interest is united with our honour; by enlarging our audience the number of our Benefactors and Subscribers is increased: and our influence becomes more extensive. It is peculiarly difficult to resist the allurements of praise and the advantages of gain. It is difficult to risk the loss of our Income, our Authority and our Reputation. It is mortifying to sink into the unnoticed Preacher, or to fall into an Odium as great as perhaps has been our Fame and Applause: for it is not uncommon for Men to contemn, where before they admired; and to conceive hatred, where before they expressed love.

Are these, my respected Friend, small temptations? Do they not call for resolution? If a noble elevation of soul above the smiles and frowns of Men be not cultivated; if the heart be not sincerely and supremely solicitous to approve itself to God, we shall be seduced into dishonest compliances with the humours of mankind, into base methods of raising an audience and gaining a name. Our Prayers and Sermons will be more adapted to the Creed of others, than to our own apprehensions concerning the truths of God: Our



Our aim will be rather to shine, than to affect and improve our Hearers; or to foster their suppos'd Orthodoxy and gratify their Taste and Prejudices, rather than to enlighten their minds and enlarge their views. Error will be connived at; the truth will be suppressed. If circumspection be not used, the influence of these temptations will extend to our private studies, and restrain the freedom of our enquiries; lest free enquiry should lead to such a change of sentiments, as must, if we would be faithful, be followed with a strain of preaching and a plan of devotion contrary to the People's fixed principles; and which they will not have liberality of mind, to receive or candour to bear with.

These are real trials of integrity. You, dear Sir, will call in every consideration that can animate your fidelity. You will fortify your mind by the contemplation of His Example who "fought not honour from Men, but came to bear Witness to the truth." You will fix your eyes on the crown of glory, the recompence of persevering adherence to CHRIST, truth and conscience.

But while we study to maintain integrity and a good conscience, what caution is necessary that we be not betrayed into indiscreet Zeal! How difficult to avoid falling into a slavish submission to the taste and will of others, and yet practise condescen-

on to their weakness! What self-command is required to instruct with patience and gentleness those who oppose themselves! What vigilance must be exercised, if we would not be precipitate in laying open the truth, or in detecting error, or in reproving vice! What prudence is necessary to accommodate ourselves to persons, times and places, and yet still act with honour, sincerity and simplicity! Here how desirable is the union of the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove! Such wisdom our great Pattern and Master displayed in his Ministry. Frequently did He avoid dangers by a prudent conduct. Frequently did He evade ensnaring questions by wary answers. He instructed his Disciples, as they were able to bear it: and did not unseasonably insist upon things which they could not receive.

Yet, my dear Sir, after all our holy care to support a purity and dignity of character; to be upright and prudent, we are exposed,

Lastly, To the influence of other Circumstances, which will painfully affect our minds and almost tempt us to desist from our labours. Here it becomes us to be vigilant.

Some will misconstrue our designs: others will censure where they ought to applaud. Some will carry it towards us with coldness and disrespect.

Some

Some in whom we rejoiced as the seeds of our ministry will fall into the snare of the Devil, and turn away from the holy commandments of God.

In the course of a few years, perhaps, we shall see those who were our warm Friends desert us from fickleness, or caprice, from unreasonable disgusts or misunderstandings we cannot account for, or prevent. As Time advances we see those who were the ornaments and supports of our societies removed by death: while our young Friends often disappoint our pleasing hopes.

In the present age a general and prevailing indifference to Religion has spread it's contagion through our Churches. Our People are unsteady and lukewarm in their regards to the cause of christian liberty and to a pure worship. Their attendance upon the services of piety is very remiss, and frequently prevented by the slightest reasons. They often appear to wait for an occasion, which may afford some plea to excuse their leaving us. If they continue with us, alas! how little is the visible good of which we are the instruments, amongst them.

Are not these circumstances which call for watchfulness? Is it not necessary that we should be attentive to the impressions they leave upon the heart, and circumspectly guard against their influence? Slight is apt to grieve; injuries to provoke the mind.

C. 2 The



The contagion of general manners and a prevailing temper is not inconsiderable. We are so formed as easily to contract, by sympathy, the dispositions of those with whom we converse. And, as observes a good Writer; "a Minister may too readily indulge himself in a remission of his labours on account of the inattention and indolence of his People and their indisposition to make a proper improvement of them."† We may be apt sometimes to give up all as lost, and in despondency excuse ourselves from all vigour and activity in a cause which we see others undermine by their coldness and indifference, or in labours which we find are ineffectual.

But let not the future experience of these dispiriting and contaminating circumstances damp, my respected Brother, your zeal and fervour, or cherish dejection, or excite anger. Rather you will endeavour to overcome the resentments of men with meekness—to attach them to you by kindness and friendship on your part—to rouse them from their *laodicean* state by active exertions of zeal—and to improve the unsuccessfulness of your ministrations into a reason for a more vigorous attempt to strengthen the things "which remain that are ready to die."

The Apostles met with difficulties and surmounted them. They were called forth to hard trials and endured

† BULKLEY'S *Christian Minister*, P. 106.

endured them. CHRIST himself laboured much in vain; but He finished the work assigned him with constancy and zeal. He, in a great degree, "spent  
 " his strength for nought and in vain; but He was  
 " glorious in the eyes of the Lord." Look, Sir, to these examples of unremitting, persevering zeal in the cause of truth and the service of immortal souls. When you begin to faint, call in the aids of christian faith and hope: call up the generous principles of love to CHRIST and his Gospel. Summon up, and exert an heroic resolution, that in the strength of CHRIST you will be faithful unto death: "that your  
 " Master may be pleased, whoever is displeased; and  
 " that your crown of glory may be secure, whatever  
 " else is lost."\*

Thus I have submitted to you some Hints concerning the temptations and snares to which the ministerial office is exposed. You will judge of their propriety and importance. Small things, you are sensible, have a great influence in forming the character: and especially deserve very serious attention, where eminent virtue and goodness is expected. But I am very apprehensive you, dear Sir, will think that the force of these ensnaring circumstances is not small. "The  
 " danger of falling short of that exalted virtue which  
 " our advantages render indispensable, and the dan-  
 " ger of perishing for ever, which will necessarily  
 " spring

\* DODDRIDGE.

“ spring from our falling short of it, hath appeared  
 “ so great to many pious persons of our profession,  
 “ that they have not scrupled to express their fears,  
 “ that a smaller proportion of our order, than of other  
 “ ranks of Men, shall obtain salvation.” \*

Far be it from us to disguise from ourselves our temptations and dangers. Aware of the circumstances which may seduce and ensnare us, let us be vigilant and circumspect; humble and fervent in prayer. Whom doth it become? Whom doth it concern to watch in all things? If not us: on whom the eyes of the world are fixed——To whom is entrusted the cause of righteousness and truth——Who are, in a great degree, charged with the salvation of Mankind, and accountable for the eternal death of those who perish through our neglect or unfaithfulness. It is a consideration more nearly interesting, which comes more closely home to our bosoms; that our own salvation is at stake. As to this great and commanding object, it may be said, we are obnoxious to a *double* risk. Not only our conduct as *Men*, and as *Christians*, in the common duties of life will enter into the account on the great day; but our deportment and labours, our spirit and aims as *Ministers* of the Gospel; as placed, by the providence of GOD, in a sphere of service to the cause of the Redeemer and the souls of

\* See Dr. GERARD's judicious Sermon, entitled *The influence of the Pastoral office on the Character examined; with a view, especially, to Mr. HUME's Representation of the spirit of that office.* 1760 P. 69.



men.—What an inducement is this to watchfulness and prayer!

Happy, thrice happy the Pastor who shall be found faithful! “When the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall appear, He shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away!”

May this, my dear Friend and Brother, be your honour and glory and bliss! Successful may your labours be now, to form this society to knowledge, virtue and vital religion! May this people appear on the great day Trophies of your success: witnesses for your piety, integrity, patience, benevolence and zeal! May they then hear our great Master and Redeemer address you with these words of applause; “Well done good and faithful Servant!” May they see him fix on your brow the unfading Diadem of glory! May they follow you into his everlasting kingdom! —How gladdenning; how transporting will be your mutual Triumphs!

Oh! may we, your Fathers and Brethren, then congratulate your Triumphs—and, with the People whom we respectively serve, be permitted, according to the infinite riches of divine grace, to join you and yours in this joyful, exulting entrance into the regions of eternal glory, light and bliss! AMEN.—  
Let all this Audience unite here their benevolent, fervent AMEN.

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### *Errata.*

Page 3. line 10. for *avail* read *await*.



